UNITED
NATIONS

S

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1999/109
3 February 1999

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

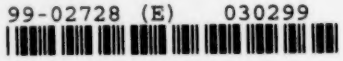
IDENTICAL LETTERS DATED 3 FEBRUARY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AFGHANISTAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, dated 29 January 1999.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) A. G. Ravan FARHÂDI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

99-02728 (E) 030299



/...

Annex

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dated 29 January 1999, on the cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of captives held in the Taliban Detention Centres in Afghanistan

On the basis of an agreement between the Islamic State of Afghanistan and the Taliban group, over the past year and a half, delegations from both sides, through the assistance of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), have visited detainees, prisoners and captives held in detention centres.

The delegation of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, through the facilitation of ICRC, was able to visit the detainees held captive by the Taliban in the Sar-Pouza Prison and the Taliban intelligence headquarters in Kandahar between 15 and 20 January 1999. Subsequent to that, between 21 and 23 January 1999, the delegation of the Islamic State of Afghanistan paid a visit to the other detainees in the Pul-I-Charkhi Prison, the third Intelligence Directorate of the Interrogation Department and the Military Department of the Taliban in Kabul.

The observations of the delegation of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, described below, are directed to the attention of interested organizations, particularly the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Commission on Human Rights, ICRC and other international humanitarian organizations, as well as the international community.

Detainees held by the Taliban

1. Among the detainees held by the Taliban in the detention centres, many are ordinary civilians held captive on the basis of their ethnic origin or religious sect and not captured in the conflict zones or the battle front lines.

2. In the detention centres of Kandahar, detainees' legs were shackled and chained. Although at the time of the visit, shackles and chains were temporarily removed from their legs, scars and marks could be easily observed. In addition, since a Taliban intelligence group accompanied the delegation of the Islamic State of Afghanistan during its visits, the detainees, for fear of later being subject to penalty and torture, abstained from commenting on how they were usually being treated. Furthermore, a request was put forward by the delegation to be accompanied by an ICRC supervisory team, which was immediately rejected by the Taliban.

3. Detainees held captive in the Taliban intelligence headquarters in Kandahar were kept in separate cells under difficult and extreme conditions.

4. During a 24-hour period, the detainees spoke of having been provided only two pieces of plain bread per person.

5. No medical facilities or services, including the provision of basic medicine, have been considered or provided for the detainees.

6. In the Sar-Pouza Prison in Kandahar, which has a maximum capacity of only 1,000 inmates, over 3,000 detainees are held captive; in some rooms there are over 60 inmates to a room.

7. During the past one and a half years, 181 detainees have lost their lives owing to malnutrition and lack of primary health facilities.

8. In the Kandahar-based detention centres, there are no files on the detainees, keeping track of when they entered the prison, not even for detainees who have been kept there for the past three years.

9. All the detainees in Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif, Sheberghaan, Maimana and Herat were denied the right of any kind of correspondence, including with their families.

10. In Kabul, the delegation of the Islamic State of Afghanistan visited 535 detainees in the Pul-I-Charkhi Prison, where the situation is less alarming than in Kandahar.

11. During the delegation's visits to Kabul and Kandahar, it was learned that prisoners captured in war zones and the battle front lines had been recently tortured, with wounds and scars easily observable.

Detainees held by the Islamic State of Afghanistan

Contrary to the degrading, inhumane and brutal treatment of detainees held by the Taliban, the Islamic State of Afghanistan, in the light of the fundamental criteria of humanitarian treatment and respect for human dignity, has approached Taliban captives with care. Therefore, during the past year and a half, as has been recorded by ICRC, only four Taliban deaths, three as a result of serious injuries and a fourth owing to severe tuberculosis, have been reported by the prison authorities of the Islamic State of Afghanistan. Detainees held by the Islamic State of Afghanistan are fed as other civil servants and medical facilities are always provided. In fact, detainees are kept without shackles or chains.

Conclusion

Despite numerous appeals by the Islamic State of Afghanistan to the Taliban authorities to improve the conditions of detainees held by them, no changes have taken place. We appeal to international humanitarian organizations and other international agencies to find the truth themselves and to urge the Taliban to respect the human dignity of detainees held captive by them so as to end the suffering of those individuals.